MARVEL 79 .com

EXILES

WORLD TOUR

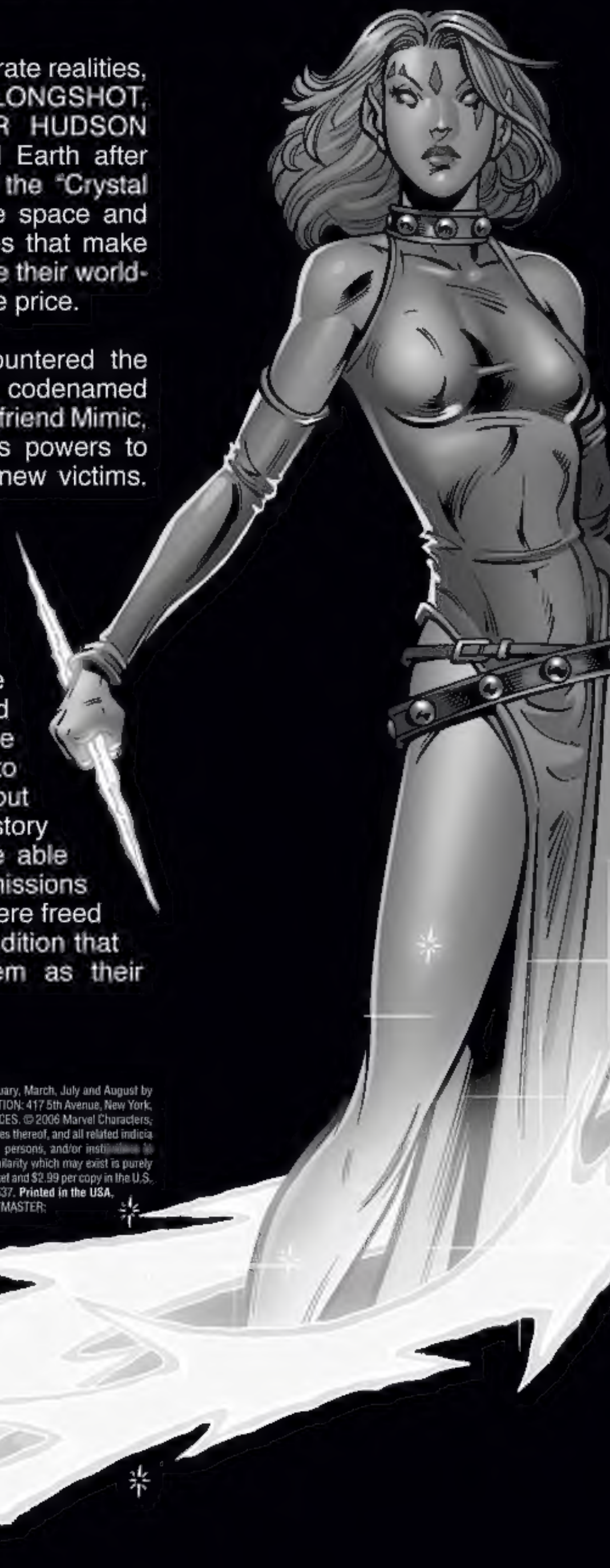
FUTURE IMPERFECT

Previously in EXILES:

Gathered together from their own separate realities, BLINK, SABRETOOTH, MORPH, LONGSHOT, SPIDER-MAN 2099, and HEATHER HUDSON risk their lives to save one imperiled Earth after another. From their headquarters in the "Crystal Palace"—an alien observatory outside space and time overlooking the countless realities that make up the Multiverse—the Exiles undertake their world-saving missions and often pay a terrible price.

Such was the case when they encountered the body-snatching, reality-warping mutant codenamed PROTEUS. After murdering Blink's boyfriend Mimic, Proteus used his own nearly limitless powers to jump to other universes in search of new victims. The Exiles have pursued him ever since.

In the futuristic world of 2099, Proteus took over the invulnerable body of HULK 2099 and used its massive power to fend off an attack by the Exiles. Proteus then fled to the world of the SQUADRON SUPREME, where he duped the mighty super-team into capturing the Exiles. They were then put on trial for altering the course of history in other realities—but the Exiles were able to convince the Squadron that their missions were just and necessary. The Exiles were freed to pursue Proteus, but only on the condition that POWER PRINCESS accompany them as their cosmic chaperone.



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"I SORT OF *MISSED* THE LAST WAR--THE ONE WHERE ALL MY FRIENDS GOT KILLED.

"MOST OF WHAT I KNOW ABOUT IT, I GOT SECOND-HAND. TO BE HONEST, I HAVEN'T A CLUE HOW IT *STARTED*.

"NOT THAT IT MAKES MUCH DIFFERENCE. THE BOTTOM LINE IS I LOST EVERYONE I WAS *CLOSEST* TO.

"TAKE *CAPTAIN MARVEL*, FOR INSTANCE. I SHARED A BOND WITH HER MORE INTIMATE THAN I HAD WITH MY OWN WIFE.

"I WAS IN HER HEAD WHEN SHE *DIED*.

"OKAY, TECHNICALLY I WAS IN A PLACE CALLED THE *NEGAVERSE*, BUT I STILL FELT HER MIND FADE TO BLACK AS SHE STAGGERED THOSE LAST FEW STEPS.

"SHE *KNEW* SHE WAS A GONER, BUT BY GOD SHE WASN'T GOING DOWN WITHOUT BRINGING *ME* BACK HOME."

KLANK

BAKOOM

"I'VE SPENT EVERY NIGHT SINCE WISHING SHE *HADN'T BOTHERED.*"

WORLD'S FINEST

FUTURE IMPERFECT

PART I OF II

WE HAD THIS WHOLE **TIME-SHARE** ARRANGEMENT, SEE? SAME GIG I HAD WITH TWO CAPTAIN MARVELS **BEFORE** HER--

--I'D BANG MY **WRIST-BANDS** TOGETHER AND CAPTAIN MARVEL WOULD APPEAR IN MY PLACE.

I'D COOL MY HEELS IN THE NEGAVERSE WHILE SHE SAVED THE DAY, THEN SHE'D BANG **HER** BANGLES AND, SHAZAM! **RICK JONES** RETURNS.

NEVER DREAMED I'D COME HOME TO **THIS.**

MOST OF MY PEEPS **ROASTED** WHEN THE NUKES HIT THE FAN. MY WIFE **MARLO** WAS AMONG 'EM.

BUT THERE WAS ONE GUY WHO ACTUALLY **PROSPERED.** SOMEONE I'M KINDA RESPONSIBLE FOR **CREATING.**

WHILE ALMOST EVERYONE ELSE WAS DYING FROM **FALLOUT,** MY OLD PAL JUST SOAKED UP THE **RADS** AND GOT STRONGER AND STRONGER AND STRONGER.

THE EXTRA JUICE JUST BROUGHT OUT THE **WORST** IN HIM.

HE'S BEEN A **TERROR** EVER SINCE, AND NO MATTER WHAT'S THROWN AT HIM, IT'S NEVER ENOUGH, BECAUSE, LET'S FACE IT--

--THE ONLY THING THAT COULD EVER STOP THE HULK... IS THE **HULK.**

THEN IT'S A LUCKY THING FOR YE THAT I HAPPENED ALONG, ENNIT, MISTER JONES?

YE KNOW, YE DINNAE BAT AN EYE WHEN I MENTIONED THA' I CAME FROM ANOTHER REALITY.

I TOLD YOU-- UNIVERSE-HOPPING IS OLD HAT FOR ME.

SO YE DID. AN' NOW YE WANT ME TAE FIND THIS BAD HULK AN' TAKE HIM DOWN A FEW PEGS?

"MAESTRO." HE CALLS HIMSELF THE MAESTRO THESE DAYS. FOLKS ARE TOO SCARED TO TELL HIM HOW DUMB IT SOUNDS.

AN' ARE YE NOT AFRAID O' HIM?

I STOPPED BEING AFRAID OF ANYTHING THE DAY I HELD MY WIFE IN A DUSTPAN.

RIGHT THEN, I'LL JUST BE NIPPIN' OFF TAE PICK ME A FIGHT.

NOT WITHOUT A WEAPON, YOU WON'T.

AND JUST SO WE'RE CLEAR-- I'M ASKING YOU TO KILL HIM.

TRUST ME, THERE'LL BE NOTHIN' LEFT O' THE BIG GALOOT WHEN I'M DONE WITH HIM.

THE CRYSTAL PALACE OUTSIDE TIME AND SPACE...

FIRST THINGS *FIRST.*

THIS DREADFUL LIGHTING HAS TO *GO.*

GUESS AGAIN, PRINCESS. OUR FIRST PRIORITY IS TO GET YOU AND SPIDER-MAN TO THE *INFIRMARY.*

I AM NOT ILL.

PROTEUS CAN'T STEAL YOUR BODY IF THERE'S *METAL* IN IT, SO I'M GOING TO IMPLANT A STEEL STRIP IN YOUR *HEAD* LIKE I DID FOR BLINK, MORPH AND SABRE--

=HHH= *YOU!* THIS LIGHT GIVES ME A HEADACHE. *FIX* IT!

Y-YES, SUBJECT-ZARDA!

REDUCING INTENSITY. SHIFTING TO HUMAN VISUAL SPECTRUM.

?

YOU NEVER TOLD ME YOU COULD DO THAT.

YOU NEVER *ASKED.*

NOW I SHALL OUTLINE A STRATEGY TO CAPTURE THIS BODYSNATCHING *HORROR* YOU PEOPLE UNLEASHED.

AT EASE, SOLDIER! YOU GOT A THING OR TWO TO LEARN ABOUT OUR *CHAIN OF COMMAND*.

I AM HERE AS A COURTESY TO YOU!

HOW MANY TIMES HAS YOUR ENEMY *ELUDED* YOU? HOW MANY PEOPLE HAS HE *SLAIN* ALONG THE WAY?

NOW WE SHALL FINALLY DEFEAT THE ONE YOU CALL *PROTEUS* BECAUSE YOU WILL ALL FOLLOW *MY* LEAD. UNDERSTOOD?

OW.

I DON'T CARE HOW YOU RAN THINGS BEFORE--THE *RESULTS* WERE A FLAT-OUT *DISASTER!*

I'VE HAD ALL I CAN STOMACH OF PRINCESS PAIN-IN-THE-BUTT. Y'WANNA REMIND HER WHO *REALLY* RUNS THIS TEAM?

ACTUALLY, *NO*, MISTER CREED.

SHE'S *RIGHT*. WE'VE MADE A MESS OF THINGS. I COULDN'T EVEN SAVE MY *BOYFRIEND*.

IF SHE WANTS THE JOB, SHE'S WELCOME TO IT.

I REALLY DON'T THINK *REVERSE PSYCHOLOGY* IS THE WAY TO GO, BLINK.

SHE'S *SERIOUS*, MORPH.

IF POWER PRINCESS THINKS SHE CAN DO BETTER, LET HER *TRY*. I HONESTLY HOPE SHE *SUCCEEDS*.

VERY GOOD, CHILD. *ADMITTING* YOUR OWN LIMITATIONS IS THE FIRST STEP TO *OVERCOMING* THEM.

LOOK, I DON'T CARE *WHO* CALLS THE SHOTS, AS LONG AS WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME PAGE.

BUT WE MIGHT BE MORE WILLING TO PLAY ALONG IF YOU CAME ACROSS A BIT LESS... *SEVERE?* MAYBE TAKE OFF THAT *HAT* ONCE IN A WHILE?

I FAIL TO SEE HOW THIS WILL MOTIVATE YOUR COMPLIANCE.

GUESS YOU NEVER HEARD THE ONE ABOUT "THE FACE THAT LAUNCHED A THOUSAND SHIPS"...

OKAY, POWER PRINCESS, *HERE'S* WHAT YOU'RE SO KEEN ON LEADING THE TROOPS INTO...

KLIK

IT'S A POST-NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST SCENARIO. THE PRINCIPAL POPULATION CENTER IN NORTH AMERICA IS A REBUILT CITY THEY CALL *DYSTOPIA*.

ANTI-MAGNETIC GENERATORS UNDERGROUND KEEP THE RADIATION LEVELS TOLERABLE, BUT THE WASTELAND BEYOND PRETTY MUCH GLOWS IN THE DARK.

THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN DYSTOPIA BARELY SCRAPE BY, AND HALF OF WHAT THEY CAN SCROUNGE THEY KICK UP TO THE MAN WHO *RULES* THEM, IF YOU CAN CALL HIM A MAN ANYMORE...

IN ALL THE UNIVERSES, THERE IS NO MORE POWERFUL, INTELLIGENT, OR *CORRUPT* VERSION OF THE HULK THAN *THIS* ONE--THE MAESTRO.

TEMPORAL SCANNERS INDICATE THAT EIGHTY YEARS FROM NOW HIS YOUNGER SELF WILL TIME-TRAVEL THERE AND CAUSE HIS DOWN-FALL. IT ALL WORKS ITSELF OUT, IF PROTEUS DOESN'T INTERFERE.

UNFORTUNATELY, I'M PRETTY SURE PROTEUS *LOVES* THE HULK BODY HE'S IN RIGHT NOW, AND HE'S LOOKING TO *UPGRADE* TO THE DELUXE MODEL.

GREAT. SO WE HAVE TO DUKE IT OUT WITH HULK-PROTEUS, *PLUS* WATCH OUR BACKS FOR AN EVEN *STRONGER* HULK?

ACTUALLY, I THINK I SEE *EXACTLY* HOW WE'LL PULL THIS OFF...

MUST'VE BEEN *SOME SHARK* BIT THAT SURF-BOARD

YOU COULD SAY THAT.

IS THERE A *SILVER SURFER* WHERE YOU COME FROM?

DOESN'T RING A BELL, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YUIR *IRON MAN* GOT CRACKED LIKE A LOBSTER.

I *WARNED* HIM NOT TO FIGHT THE MAESTRO ONE-ON-ONE. BUT TONY STARK NEVER WAS A VERY GOOD LISTENER.

ANYHOW, I DIDN'T BRING YOU DOWN HERE TO ADMIRE MY *COLLECTION.*

I BROUGHT YOU HERE TO GIVE YOU *THIS...*

A SUPER-TECH MUTANT NAMED FORGE MADE IT

HE DESIGNED THE GUN SPECIFICALLY TO KILL THE MAESTRO, BUT THE GRAVITY COPS NABBED HIM BEFORE HE COULD USE IT.

I, AH...IT'S METAL, ENNIT? I HAVE A WEE PROBLEM WITH METAL. CANNAE TOUCH THE STUFF.

HOW 'BOUT YOU TAKE IT AND GO LEE HARVEY OSWALD ON THE BIG GUY?

SAY, WHAT KIND OF HULK ARE YOU?

OCH, YE'VE NO IDEA, MATE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, I'VE A TRICK OR TWO UP MY SLEEVE THAT YUIR MAESTRO S NEVER SEEN

JUST WRAP THE GUN IN CLOTH AN' LEAVE A HOLE NEAR THE TRIGGER.

OKAY I'LL ADJUST THE GRIP TO FIT YOUR HAND.

HERE'S A SCHEMATIC OF THE MAESTRO'S NEW FORTRESS. THIS LITTLE DOODAD WILL GUIDE YOU STRAIGHT TO HIS MAIN RECEPTION HALL.

TODAY'S THE DAY HE GIVES ALL THE SUCK-UPS AND SELL-OUTS THEIR WEEKLY AUDIENCE--IT'S YOUR BEST CHANCE TO NAIL HIM.

PUT THIS OVER YOUR HEAD, AND YOU SHOULD BE PRETTY MUCH ABLE TO WALK RIGHT IN

REALLY NOW? BECAUSE STEALTH IS HARDLY MY FORTE.

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE SNEAKY. BIG AND GREEN MEANS ONE THING TO FOLKS AROUND HERE. GET OUT OF THE WAY.

WON'T MY HANDS AN' FEET BE A DEAD GIVEAWAY?

YOU DON'T DIG HOW SCARED PEOPLE ARE OF THE MAESTRO. THEY WON'T SWEAT THE DETAILS.

THE ELEVATOR WILL BRING YOU UP NEXT TO THE MARKET SQUARE.

GOOD LUCK!

GO PUT BRUCE OUT OF HIS MISERY.. AND EVERYONE ELSE'S...

CLUELESS WONDER, SO HE WAS, BUT *USEFUL*. I'LL HAVE TAE THANK HIM PROPERLY WHEN I M RUNNIN' THE PLACE...

...THOUGH FROM THE LOOK OF THIS JUNK-PILE CITY, I MIGHT BE CHANGIN' MY NAME FROM "MAESTRO" TAE *MASTER-BLASTER*.

WHO RUNS BARTERTOWN...? *HEH*

WAS THAT *HIM*?

I TOLD YOU HE'S BIG!

YOU THERE! WAIT YOUR TURN!

YE REALLY SHOULD SACK YUIR GUARDS, MAESTRO.

THOUGHT I'D HAVE TAE *FIGHT* MY WAY IN THAT LAST STRETCH, BUT NONE OF 'EM SO MUCH AS *QUESTIONED* ME.

THAT IS BECAUSE I *ORDERED* THEM TO LET YOU PASS...

...*PROTEUS*.

...HOW...?

THE EXILES WERE ALWAYS A STEP *BEHIND* YOU. I SUGGESTED THEY SKIP *AHEAD*.

BUT...BUT...YE AN' YUIR *SUPER-FRIENDS* WERE MEANT TAE *STOP* THOSE BAMPOTS!

AN' WHAT'RE YE DOIN' GETTIN' COZY WI' *HIM*?!

APPARENTLY, THEY REALIZED THEY COULD DO *BUSINESS* WITH ME.

I *AM* A REASONABLE MAN, AFTER ALL, WHEREAS *YOU* ARE CRAZY ENOUGH TO THINK YOU COULD JUST MARCH IN HERE--

--AND STEAL MY BODY!

MAESTRO..

FORGE SENDS HIS REGARDS!

THROOM

BETTER YET...

CHOOM

=UNF= TAKE COVER!

BLINK

OCH, D'YE THINK ME DISARMED?

WE HAVE A TRANSACTION TAE COMPLETE, SO WE DO..

...I GET YUIR ENDLESS STRENGTH...

...AND YE GET SWEET OBLIVION. DEAL?

..UNH...

DEAL.

ARHH!

...PAIN... POISON...!

HEH, HEH.

THAT'D BE THE CHUNK OF STEEL IN MY NOGGIN.

THWP

YOU FELL FOR THE OL' BAIT-AN'-SWITCH, PROTEY.

...NO FAIR... NO--

LIGHTS OUT, UGLY!

--->MMPH!<

WHRAK

-RRRMPH!-

KROOOSH!!

TIME TO *FINISH* THIS.

MY BLADE WILL *NOT* PENETRATE HIS HULK-SKIN.

IT WILL WITH *MY* ARM BEHIND IT.

...DID WE GET 'IM...?

SHUNK

YEARRRHH!

THAT GOT 'IM.

REMARKABLE.

=SNFF=
=SNFF=

AW, NO...

THAT THING I SAID ABOUT BEING A *REASONABLE MAN...?*

FORGET IT!

NEXT:

HULK-A-MANIA!